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Getting it right

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Getting it Right: The Complexity and Challenges of Interprofessional Working and the Implications for Educational Psychology Training Programmes



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Introduction

Internationally, there has been a drive towards the promotion and implementation of approaches to improve interagency and interprofessional working practices with children and adults. In Scotland, the policy imperative ‘Getting it Right for Every Child’ (Scottish Executive, 2006) established a framework for professional practice with the aim of professionals working together for the benefit of the children and young people they work with.

However, it is recognised that interprofessional working may lead to tensions and conflicts due to different personal and professional values, morals and principles (e.g. Doyle, Miller, & Mirrza. 2009). Therefore, it is important that initial training offers adequate preparation for working in a potentially challenging interprofessional environment.

This presentation reports an exploratory investigation into the perceptions of ethics and ethical thinking of a group of trainee educational psychologists on one professional training programme. This formed part of a systematic review of teaching and learning approaches (see research design).

Objectives

The primary objectives of the study were to:

- (a) gain an insight into the ethical awareness and understanding of trainee educational psychologists in the early stages of their professional training programme; and
- (b) inform the teaching of ethics within the professional training programme.

Conceptual Framework

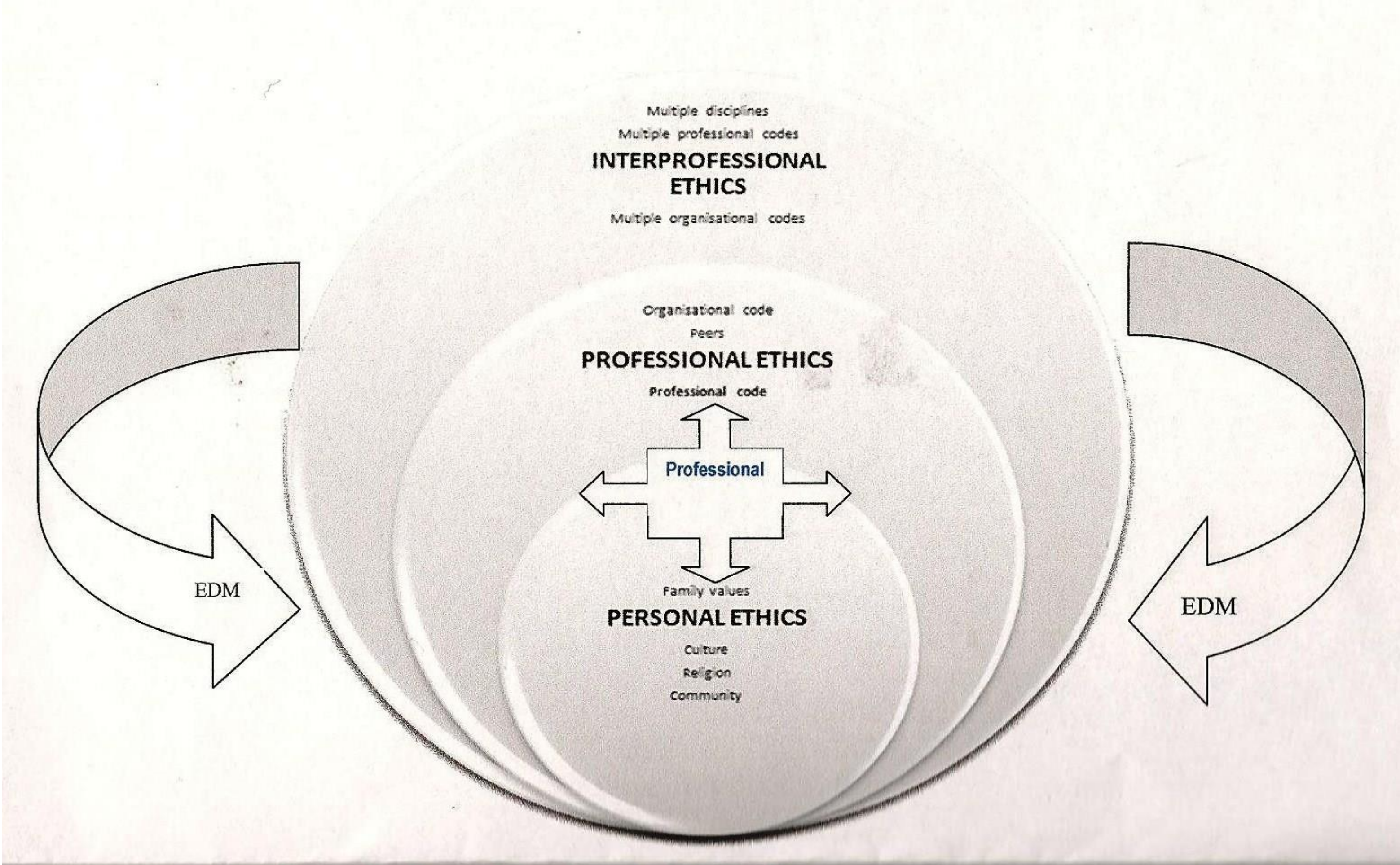


Figure 1: Conceptual representation of the dynamic interaction between personal, professional and interprofessional ethics
Adapted from diagram in Hannah and Jindal-Snape (forthcoming)

Method

Focus group interviews were the preferred method given the perceived advantages of flexibility, cost-effectiveness, interactive nature of the process, and opportunity for learning from others.

Fourteen trainee educational psychologists participated in two focus groups (n=7 in each group) with the authors acting as facilitators. Focus groups were conducted during the first term of year 1 of the programme.

Questions explored the trainee educational psychologists' understanding of ethics and conflicts between personal, professional and interprofessional ethics.

Sessions were audio recorded and transcribed data were thematically analysed by the authors using an inductive approach.

Research Design

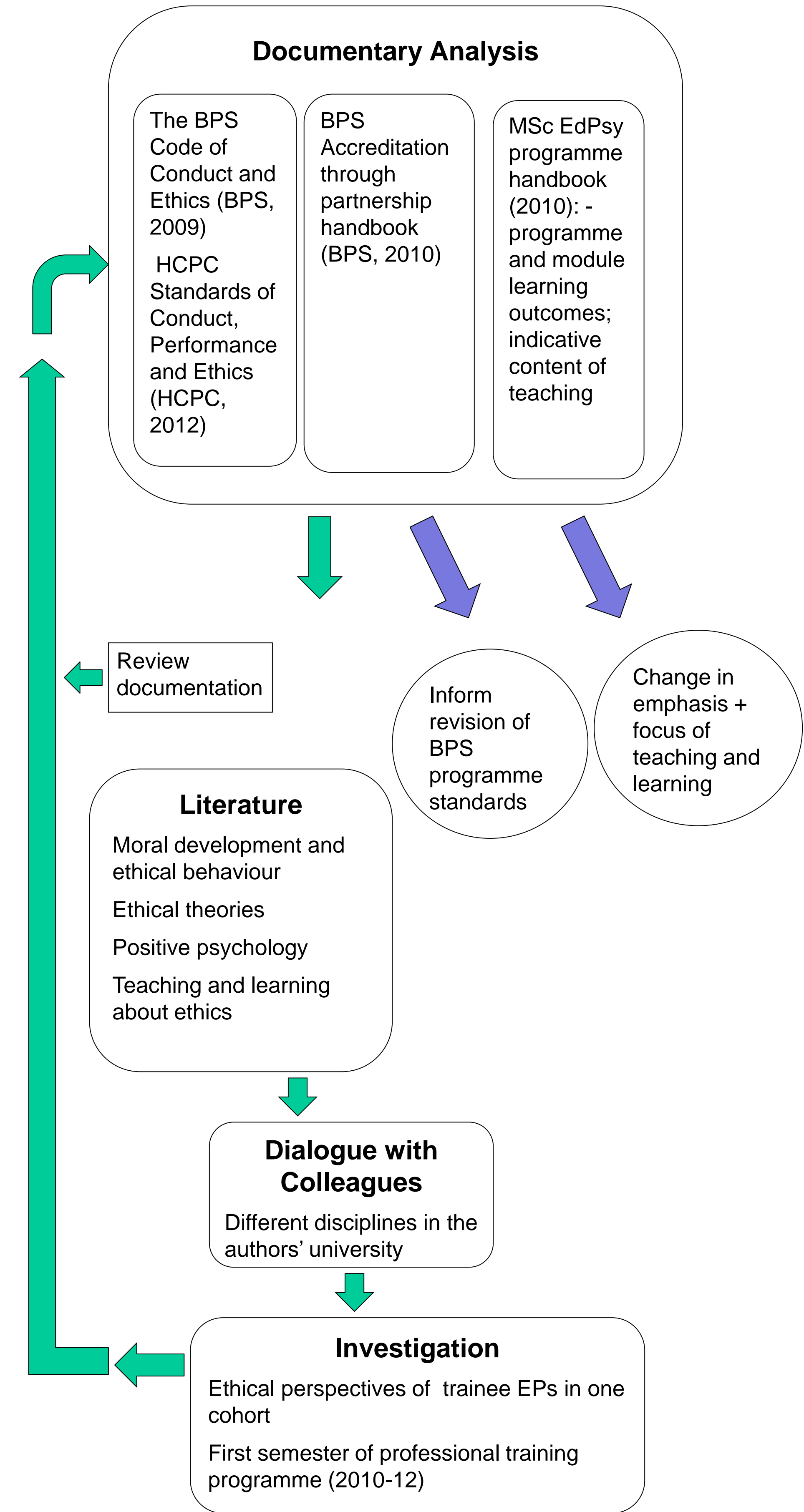


Figure 2 Systematic review process
Adapted from diagram in Hannah and Murray (forthcoming)

Results: Main Points

- Trainee educational psychologists:-
1. Aware of personal ethics, including its evolving nature, contextual influences and resultant individual differences.
 2. No reference to ethical theories underpinning personal ethics, reflecting a gap in baseline knowledge.
 3. Aware of significance of professional ethics. Viewed codes as offering guidance to professional behaviour and leading to positive consequences for both clients and professionals.
 4. Able to identify ethical dilemmas in professional practice such as those arising from conflict with personal values and from working in an interagency and interprofessional context.
- “...recently an early intervention team was set up ... representation from police,...social work , education and the education person thought it was their right to get all the information on the people from the educational psychologist”
5. No reference to ways of addressing ethical dilemmas in professional practice, such as the use of ethical decision making (EDM) models, reflecting gap in baseline knowledge.
 6. Acknowledge importance of professional development , including role of formal training, peer support, supervision, working in groups and opportunities for reflection.

Conclusion

The results from this investigation stimulated thinking about ways of supporting trainee educational psychologists' ethical development through creating opportunities for learning and a supportive culture influenced by positive psychology.

Implications for EP training programme

1. Incorporate more explicit teaching of ethical theory and application using exemplar case studies.
2. Incorporate more explicit teaching of ethical decision making (EDM) models.
3. Further opportunities for interdisciplinary learning in a ‘safe’ environment in which trainees are supported by tutors and peers to reflect on their personal and professional values and those of students in other disciplines.
4. Greater emphasis on developing self-awareness of personal value base.
5. Continue to embed an ‘Implicit curriculum’ where tutors model respectful and collegiate behaviour; demonstrate care and support for trainees; whilst challenging trainees to continually aspire to develop their practice.

Results: Identified Themes

Six main themes were identified:

- Perspectives on ethics
- Ethics as a dynamic process
- Factors that inform ethical decision making
- Ethical dilemmas
- Ethical intentions and consequences
- Personal values and career choice

References

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